HOSEA 8

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Israel Reaps the Whirlwind	The Apostasy of Israel	All Israel has forgotten the Lord and has sought help from other gods and other nations (4:1-8:14)	The Lord Condemns Israel for Idol Worship	An Omen
8:1-7 (1-7)	8:1-10 (1-3)	8:1-6 (1-6)	8:1-3	8:1-7 (1-7)
	(4-6)		8:4-10	
	(7-10)	8:7-10 (7-10)		Israel Ruined by Relying on Foreign Powers
8:8-10 (8-10)				8:8-10 (8-10)
				Against the Outward Show of Worship
8:11-14 (11-14)	8:11-14 (11-13)	8:11-14 (11-14)	8:11-13	8:11-14 (11-14)
	(14)		8:14	

READING CYCLE THREE (see "Bible Interpretation Seminar")
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 8:1-7

1*Put* the trumpet to your lips!
Like an eagle *the enemy* comes against the house of the LORD,
Because they have transgressed My covenant
And rebelled against My law.
2They cry out to Me,
"My God, we of Israel know You!"
3Israel has rejected the good;
The enemy will pursue him.
4They have set up kings, but not by Me;
They have appointed princes, but I did not know *it*.
With their silver and gold they have made idols for themselves,
That they might be cut off.
5He has rejected your calf, O Samaria, saying,
"My anger burns against them!"
How long will they be incapable of innocence?
6For from Israel is even this!
A craftsman made it, so it is not God;
Surely the calf of Samaria will be broken to pieces.
7For they sow the wind
And they reap the whirlwind.
The standing grain has no heads;
It yields no grain.
Should it yield, strangers would swallow it up.

8:1 "the trumpet" This refers to the "shophar" or "ram's horn" (BDB 1051), which was used for religious purposes and to communicate information to military troops. See note at Hos. 5:8. God is calling Assyria to punish Israel (cf. Hos. 8:3b; Deut. 28:49; Isa. 10:5).

SPECIAL TOPIC: HORNS USED BY ISRAEL

▣ **"an eagle"** This refers to a vulture (BDB 676; see UBS *Fauna and Flora of the Bible*, pp. 82-84). The symbolism is clear, an unclean bird of prey, which has been sent by God, symbolizing the invading Assyrian army (Targums) with its corresponding death and destruction.

▣ **"the house of the LORD"** This refers to the people of God, here the northern tribes, Israel (cf. Hos. 9:3-4,15, NIV). Although the NET Bible translates it as "the temple of the LORD."

▣ **"transgressed My covenant"** This means "gone beyond the boundary" (BDB 716, KB 778, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Hos. 6:7; Deut. 17:2; Josh. 7:11,15; Jdg. 2:20; 2 Kgs. 18:12; Jer. 34:18).

Hosea uses the concept of covenant several times (cf. Hos. 2:18; 6:7; 8:1; see SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT). His unique message from God transforms sin from violation of a law to violation of love (i.e., marriage covenant).

▣ **"rebelled against My law"** This means "reject rightful authority" (BDB 833, KB 981, *Qal* PERFECT). The two phrases ("transgressed" and "rebelled") in this verse are in a Hebrew parallel relationship (both *Qal* PERFECTS, as are "My covenant" and "My law").

The NIDOTTE, vol. 4, p. 712, offers an interesting list of Israel's sins against YHWH:

1. "go after my lovers," Hos. 2:5,13
2. "forgot Me," Hos. 2:13; 4:6; 8:14; 13:6
3. "is stubborn," Hos. 4:16; 9:15
4. "dealt treacherously against the Lord," Hos. 5:7; 6:7
5. "deal falsely," Hos. 7:1; 10:2
6. "lie," Hos. 7:3; 10:13; 11:12
7. "strayed from Me," Hos. 7:13
8. "have rebelled against Me," Hos. 7:13; 8:1
9. "speak lies against Me," Hos. 7:13
10. "do not cry to Me from their heart," Hos. 7:14
11. "turn away from Me," Hos. 7:14
12. transgressed my covenant," Hos. 8:1
13. rebelled against my law," Hos. 8:1

8:2 "They cry out to Me,

'My God, we of Israel know You'" They knew God as far as ritual and cultic liturgy (i.e., "cry out" BDB 277; KB 277, *Qal* IMPERFECT), but they did not know (BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* PERFECT) Him in personal relationship and faith. What a tragedy to have the form of godliness but not to know God (cf. Hos. 7:14; Isa. 29:13; Jeremiah 7; Matt. 7:21-23; 2 Tim .3:5).

SPECIAL TOPIC: KNOW

8:3 "Israel has rejected the good" This VERB (BDB 276, KB 276, *Qal* PERFECT) is repeated in Hos. 8:5. Israel rejected God's covenant. He rejects their "calf" worship! This seems to refer to YHWH's covenant obedience (cf. Amos 5:14, 15; Micah 6:8), which denotes a healthy, loving, prosperous society.

8:4 "They have set up kings, but not by Me" Note the parallel between the first two lines. The next two lines are parallel to Hos. 8:5's first two lines and the last two of Hos. 8:6. All of these refer to the golden calves. Images meant to represent YHWH (cf. Exod. 32), but which had turned into fertility idols!

"They" refers to the leaders (priests and princes) of Israel. They had turned away from the Davidic kings (in Judah) and appointed their own leaders and made their own worship sites (the two "calves" set up by Jeroboam I at Bethel and Dan). The contemporary example is the series of kings after Jeroboam II, (see note on Hos. 7:3). YHWH was their true king and only He could designate His earthly representative.

8:5 "calf" Jeroboam I, the new leader of the northern tribe (in 922 B.C.) did not want his people to continue to worship in Jerusalem so he set up two golden calves as a symbol of YHWHism in Dan in the north and Bethel in the south in order to keep his people at home. This was thoroughly denounced (e.g., Exod. 32:4-5; 1 Kgs. 12:28-29; Hosea 13:2).

▣ **"He has rejected. . .My anger burns against them"** God's feelings about these alternate worship sites is clearly expressed:

1. "Reject" (BDB 276, KB 276, *Qal* PERFECT) is a strong term; the same root in the *Hiphil* means "stench"! The NIV translates it as "throw out."
2. "Anger burned" (BDB 354, KB 351, *Qal* PERFECT) is used to describe God's reaction to covenant disobedience (e.g., often in Moses, Deut. 6:15; 7:4; 11:17; 29:26; 31:17; rare in the prophets, Isa. 5:24-25).

SPECIAL TOPIC: PROBLEMS AND LIMITATIONS OF HUMAN LANGUAGE

▣

NASB, NRSV	**"How long will they be incapable of innocence?"**
NKJV, Peshitta	**"How long *will it be* until they attain to innocence? "**
TEV	**"How long will it be before they give up their idolatry?"**
NJB	**"How long will it be before they recover their innocence?"**
REB	**"How long must they remain guilty?"**
JPSOA, LXX	**"Will they never be capable of purity?"**

This is a rhetorical question that demands a negative response. Israel has been permanently rendered incapable of innocence or purity!

8:6 This verse may be a sarcastic response to Israel's (of all people) idolatry. Those who were warned to have no image of God (cf. Exod. 20:4-5, 32:1-4; Deut. 5:7,8-9) have a calf — two of them!

8:7 "For they sow the wind,
And they reap the whirlwind" The first two lines form a proverb that speaks of our responsibility to God both corporately and individually (i.e., the spiritual principle of sowing and reaping, cf. Job 34:11,25; Ps. 28:4; 62:12; Prov. 12:14; 24:12; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Ezek. 33:20; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; 1 Cor. 3:8; 2 Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7-10; 2 Tim. 4:14; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12).

▣ **"strangers would swallow it up"** This is a reference to the exile of Israel by Assyria (cf. Isa. 1:7). The crops (if there are any, cf. Hos. 8:7, lines c,d) that Israel had thanked Ba'al for would not be enjoyed by others (i.e., Assyrians).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 8:8-10

[8]Israel is swallowed up;
They are now among the nations
Like a vessel in which no one delights.
[9]For they have gone up to Assyria,
***Like* a wild donkey all alone;**
Ephraim has hired lovers.
[10]Even though they hire *allies* among the nations,
Now I will gather them up;
And they will begin to diminish
Because of the burden of the king of princes.

8:8 "Israel is swallowed up" This VERB (BDB 118, KB 134, *Niphal* PERFECT) is used as a metaphor of suddenness of death (*Sheol*, cf. Prov. 1:12) and destruction. Here it is used for Israel being taken into exile (e.g., Ps. 124:3; Jer. 51:34; Lam. 2:16).

▣ **"Like a vessel in which no one delights"** The term "vessel" (BDB 479) has a wide semantic field:

1. something made by man from precious materials (i.e., the golden calves)
2. a precious container of some kind (e.g., Jer. 25:34d)
3. items taken into exile (i.e., "baggage," e.g., Jer. 46:19; Ezek. 13:3,4,7)
4. metaphor of a defeated nation (e.g., Jer. 48:38)

There may be an intentional ambiguity between #4 and #1! The descendants of Israel were to be "a special treasure among all the people," "a kingdom of priests" (cf. Exod. 19:5-6), but now they were just like the nations. God's purpose of revealing Himself to the world through them (cf. Exod. 19:5c; Amos 3:2) has been thwarted!

8:9 "they have gone up to Assyria" This VERB (BDB 748, KB 828, *Qal* PERFECT) is used in the sense of compass direction. Although Assyria is to the northeast, the only road to it was directly north. North became a metaphor for evil and invasion. This verse is about Israel seeking a political alliance with Assyria for protection.

▣ **"Like a wild donkey all alone"** One of the characteristics of wild donkeys (BDB 825) during mating season (allusion to the fertility cult) is their uncontrollableness (cf. Jer. 2:23-24). Israel was acting just this way toward idolatry.

▣ **"Ephraim has hired lovers"** The VERB (BDB 1071, KB 1759, *Hiphil* PERFECT) has the connotation of hired cultic lovers (cf. Hos. 2:12). This refers to the foreign alliances (e.g., Hos. 8:10; Ezek. 16:36-37). These political alliances always involved, to some extent, the deities of the nation. The irony is that her lovers are now enemies (cf. Hos. 8:3)!

In this context it is obvious that fertility worship is used as a way to denote spiritual adultery. It is difficult to know if this is (1) literal, (2) metaphorical, or (3) both. There is very little direct evidence of a sexual component to Canaanite Ba'al worship. Israel may have added this, which makes their guilt even more abominable!

8:10 "Even though they hire *allies* among the nations. . .the burden of the king of princes" This refers to the heavy tribute demanded by Assyria (whose king is called "the king of princes," which is parallel to the Babylonian title, "king of kings").

▣ **"Now I will gather them up"** The VERB (BDB 867, KB 1062, *Piel* IMPERFECT) is commonly used for God gathering His scattered people after a judgment, but here it means to gather them for judgment (i.e., exile).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 8:11-14

[11]Since Ephraim has multiplied altars for sin,
They have become altars of sinning for him.
[12]Though I wrote for him ten thousand *precepts* of My law,
They are regarded as a strange thing.
[13]As for My sacrificial gifts,
They sacrifice the flesh and eat *it*,
***But* the LORD has taken no delight in them.**
Now He will remember their iniquity,
And punish *them* for their sins;
They will return to Egypt.
[14]For Israel has forgotten his Maker and built palaces;
And Judah has multiplied fortified cities,
But I will send a fire on its cities that it may consume its palatial dwellings.

8:11 "Ephraim has multiplied altars for sin" This refers either to

1. the golden calf worship at both Dan and Bethel
2. the local Ba'al shrines in each village on every high hill

The irony is that Israel's religiosity was not helpful, but disastrous! The phrase "altars for sin" is repeated twice for emphasis.

8:12 "Though I wrote for him ten thousand *precepts* of My law" God has clearly and repeatedly revealed Himself to them (i.e., "ten thousand precepts", e.g., Hos. 11:2 and 2 Kgs. 17:13-15 for Judah). Their problem was not lack of information, but lack of

1. truth
2. covenant loyalty
3. personal faith (cf. Hos. 4:1)

They rebelled against God's light and truth.

▣

NASB, NRSV	**"They are regarded as a strange thing"**
NKJV	**"*But* they were considered a strange thing"**
TEV	**"But they reject them as strange and foreign"**
NJB	**"Ephraim regards it as alien to him"**
REB	**"They are treated as irrelevant"**
JPSOA	**"have been treated as something alien"**

The term "strange thing" (DBD 266, KB 267, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) is used in several senses:

1. non-family members (e.g., Deut. 25:5; Hosea 5:7)
2. not conforming to proper regulations
   a. incense, Exod. 30:9
   b. fire, Lev. 10:1
3. adulterers, e.g., Prov. 2:16; 5:3,20; 7:5; 22:14
4. foreigners (enemies, invaders), e.g., Hos. 7:9; 8:7; Isa. 1:7; 25:2,5; 29:5; 61:5; Jer. 51:51; Ezek. 28:7,10

God's law had become to them as a non-family foreigner!

8:13 "They sacrificed the flesh and ate *it*" Notice the use of NOUN (BDB 257, KB 261) and VERB (BDB 256) for emphasis. This seems to refer to the selfish motive of appetite in the performing of religious ritual, especially the communal meal (cf. Lev. 7:15-18).

▣ **"*But* the LORD has taken no delight in them"** The term "delight" (BDB 953, KB 1280, *Qal* PERFECT) means "accept" (people, cf. Jer. 14:10; Ezek. 20:40 and sacrifices, cf. Jer. 14:12; Ezek. 20:41). This verse and concept are paralleled by 5:6. God is only pleased with cultic ritual when it is accompanied by heartfelt faith and obedience (cf. Amos 5:21- 28: Micah 6:6-8).

▣ **"Now He will remember their iniquity"** See note at Hos. 7:2.

▣ **"They will return to Egypt"** This seems be a metaphor for a reverse Exodus or a way of referring to slavery (cf. Hos. 7:16; 9:3). When you compare this to 11:5 it seems like a contradiction. However, I think this is using Egypt as a symbol of slavery. Israel will return to slavery, but this time it will be to the nation of Assyria (i.e., exile).

Israel will not "turn" (i.e., repent BDB 996, KB 1427) so she will "return" (i.e., exile, same VERB).

8:14 "Israel has forgotten" Israel has "forgotten" (BDB 1013, KB 1484, *Qal* IMPERFECT with *waw*) God and His covenant (cf. Hos. 2:13; 4:6; 13:6), so God will "remember" (cf. Hos. 8:13d) her iniquities!

▣ **"Maker"** This is the DIRECT OBJECT of "forgotten" and it is a *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE of the VERB "to make" (BDB 793, KB 889). There is an irony between Israel making idols (i.e., golden

calves) for themselves (cf. Hos. 8:6) and forgetting the One who made them (cf. Gen. 1:26; Isa. 17:7).

It is possible that "maker" refers to God's initiation to form a people (i.e., call of Abraham, the Exodus, the giving of the Law at Sinai), not Genesis.

▣ **"built palaces. . .fortified cities"** Israel was trusting in her wealth (cf. Hos. 8:14c). Judah was trusting in her military might. The Maker is not impressed by human makings. They will be destroyed! In 2 Kgs. 18:13 Sennacherib is said to have captured all of the fortified cities of Judah.

▣ **"I will send fire"** NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 533, "the punishment prophesied for Israel's enemies often included the burning of cities (Jer. 43:12-13; 49:27), expressed with particular effect in Amos 1:4,7,10,12,14; 2:2,5; Hosea 8:14, where the concept of holy war probably lies behind the formula, 'I will send fire upon...'" If so, then instead of God fighting for and defending Israel, He is the very One who is her enemy! What a shocking reversal, so characteristic of the prophets' messages!

SPECIAL TOPIC: FIRE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Who does the "they" refer to in Hos. 8:4?
2. Why was "golden calf" worship such an abomination to YHWH?
3. Is Hos. 8:13 in contradiction to Hos. 11:5?

| Home | Old Testament Studies | Hosea Table of Contents | Previous Section | Next Section |

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